Five Poems from Saint Mary's Art Cloister

by Doug Tanoury

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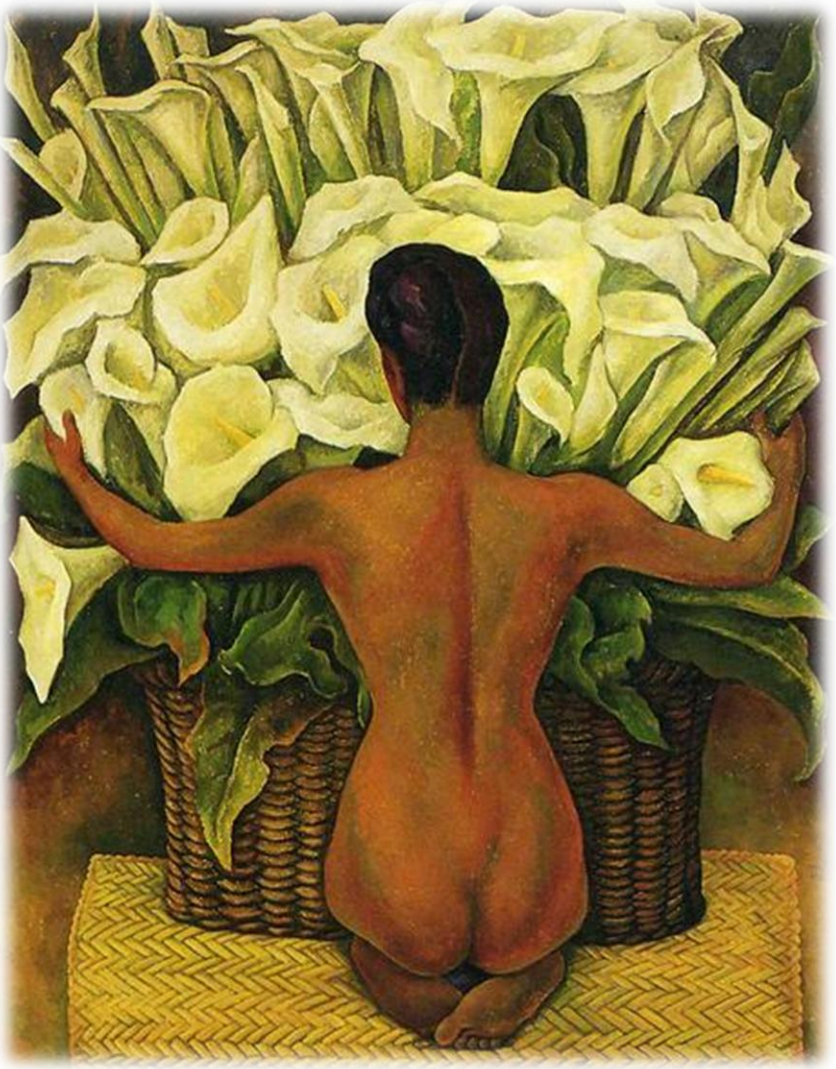
Nude with Calla Lilies



In Rivera's painting there is
No face for it is a portrait
Of form a study of shape

Symmetry and balance that is
A woman in a Vitruvian pose
Her body in bloom

Crouched on a straw mat
The soles of her feet cross
Simply beneath her

Like leaves under a blossom
Lilies in a wicker basket
Before her

Stand in contrast to the
Strict order that frames
Them

And the straight and curved line
That rises from ass to spine
To part her hair

Her arms spread like stems
Supporting of weight of
Blossoms

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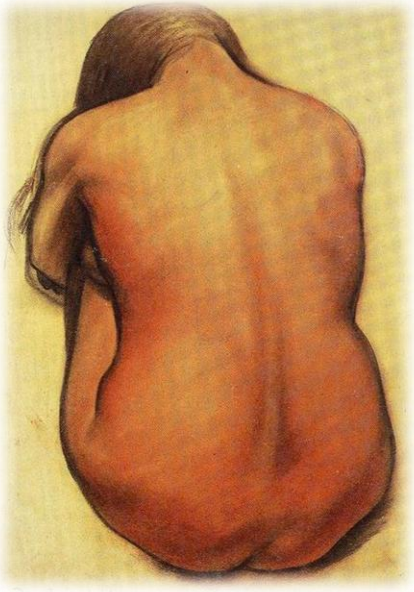
Back of a Seated Nude



In Rivera's Nude there is no trace of softness
And no hint of the sensual but only a certain
Hardness that is withdrawal and a coldness
That is retreat in a pose completely closed

And one who looks at her feels this must be
The woman formed in clay before God's breath
Or it is Eve repentant in shame after tasting
Forbidden fruit and feeding it to man

The sharp line of her spine curves upward
Her head is bowed downward and
She is a flower closed and unopened with
Petals folded tightly and hidden in a bud

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El Paseo de los Melancólicos

If I walked in Rivera's landscape
Along a path bordered in darkness
There is light in the distance

Where the sun through the trees
Paints a bright pattern on the ground
And I know it is a long walk

From darkness that gives way only
Grudgingly in small spots that
Grow in intensity toward brilliance

The stark verticals of pines are balanced
By the long horizontal of hedge in a vision
Where opposites meet quietly

In the coolness of shade in the silence
Of foliage and if I walked down this
Twilight toward a distant daylight

I would remember the smell of pines
And earth and the sunlight in broken
Windowpane patterns on the path

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Picture of Natasha Gellman

In Rivera's portrait a woman in white
Reclines on a sofa the slit in her dress
Opens like a lily and her legs
Extend like the pistils from a blossom

Calla lilies in the background seem to
Follow her form in flower and mirror
The soft horizontal angle of legs
The slight vertical attitude of torso

And one who looks on her is left wondering
If she is a mere reflection of the lilies
Or if the stems and blossoms are just
A sort of shadow that she alone can cast

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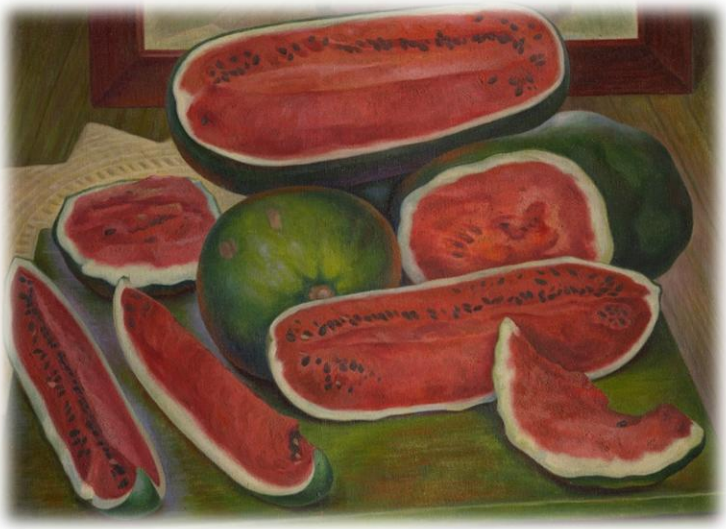
Las Sandias



In Rivera's painting melons are
Sliced and resting ripe crimson
Bordered in bone-white rind open
And inviting on a green wooden table

That is the matching color of the melon
Skins themselves and veins of black seeds
Dot through the meat and accent its
Redness and deepen its lushness

The one piece bitten waits for the unseen
Hand that set it down to pick it up again
And lift it to lips and tongue that are the
Matching color of the melon's ripeness

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